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August 28, 2006

Mr. K. Srinivasan
Prime Point Foundation

A Case for PR Accreditation

Dear Mr. Srinivasan:

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to put forth my views on the accreditation process initiated by PRCI. Let me compliment you for being a part of this great initiative, which had been long overdue

All of us want that the practice of public relations should be viewed as a bonafide profession, which its own body of knowledge, If we do not demonstrate this exclusivity now, we risk forever to remain submerged in the quagmire of fixers, an image that continues to fox and relegate the profession to the background.

Public Relations is the art and science of managing communication. Period. And no one else can replace it. The managements world over are realising its importance, unlike in our own country, and it continues to be the most respected and sought-after profession today because while the CEOs and heads of organisations or even the MBAs manage the men, material, machine and money, it is the expert PR professionals who alone can help the organisations manage the 4Ms with effective communication management.

I must reiterate that in 1987, Mr. K.S. Neelakandan, former national President of Public Relations Society of India along with several other stalwarts had put together and established the India Foundation for PR Education & Research in Mumbai. This Foundation was registered, and nation-wide centres were also established for conducting the examinations for Diploma and Association Fellow of Public Relations.

The first examination was conducted in 1988. Though I had post-graduate degree in mass communication, and work experience first as a journalist, and later in the public relations of about 7 years at that time, I sat through the all-India examination for APR and topped in the written examination, and interview, and my case study was also

adjudged the best which was recognised at the All India PR Conference in Kolkata.

Later I remained closely associated with IFPR having been appointed as a Counsellor for Panjab, Haryana, and Chandigarh region by the IFPR, to mentor those wanting to take up the examination for accreditation.

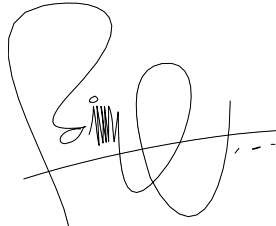
I had always been requesting the PRSI leadership from time to time to revive IFPR, which could not carry on with the untimely demise of Mr. Ajit of Indian Airlines, and Mr. Anil Basu of Goodyear, who had been the pillars of its success.

Now the current initiative spearheaded by you is most timely. My only request is that let not this momentum fizzle away. It would require constant follow up to put this together and implement it.

I have gone through the zero draft of the recommendations, very effectively put together by Ms Uma Bhushan. My compliments to her. However, I shall like to put across some observations and recommendations, whatever worth these are, for your kind consideration.

With best personal regards,

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Charanjit Singh', written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C' and 'S'.

Charanjit Singh
Managing Director

Encls: aa

Draft Recommendations for Accreditation of Public Relations Practitioners in India

Draft prepared by

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1. INTRODUCTION

The accreditation body should be newly constituted and registered as a non-profit educational trust.

2. TITLE

Such a body may be named as 'India Institute of Public Relations' or 'India Foundation for Public Relations', or 'Board of PR Accreditation'

3. ORGANISATIONAL SETUP

This Institute should have a managing committee of 10 or 20 founder members comprising of senior PR professionals and may even have a representative each from the Public Relations Council of India, Public Relations Society of India, IPRA, PRCAI, and ABCI. Each organisation can nominate an individual to be a part of this institute. This consortium shall be independent of any other public relations body in the country.

However the Institute shall authorise various study centres across the country managed and run by the local chapters of various public relations bodies.

Such an institute may also explore the possibility of working in all the SAARC nations besides pan-India.

The Institute must have an independent secretariat with an independent secretary-general with support staff to man day to day functioning.

4. OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of IIPR is to establish professional standards of Public Relations practice in the country, setup benchmarks in best PR practices, update the knowledge and skills of the PR practitioners through regular examination, orientation and periodic review, and ensure its ethical and bonafide practice in the country.

The IIPR shall:

- a. Regulate the accreditation process of public relations practitioners in the country leading to APR (Accredited Public Relations professional) so that only bonafide qualified and experienced professionals are allowed to practice the profession with requisite basic qualifications in public relations, mass communications, or journalism.
- b. Set up the criteria for accreditation, including selection, written examination, personal interview, and case study presentation
- c. Develop the syllabus for studies in public relations to help the practitioners apply their broad knowledge, strategic perspective and sound professional judgment based on ethical code of conduct
- d. Ensure ethical practice in the conduct of profession by its accredited public relations professionals.
- e. Setup an academic committee to study and upgrade the syllabus of PR

diploma and degree examinations offered by various universities and organisations, whether as a regular course or through distant learning, and in coordination with the respective bodies to streamline the syllabus at national level

- f. Put in place an affiliation procedure for all such organisations offering diploma in public relations
- g. Work closely with the human resource ministry and education department, in the Government of India, as well as with UGC, so as to ensure conformance to the standards established by the Institute
- h. set up Centres of Excellence in Public Relations, in various Universities or business schools
- i. promote research in public relations fields
- j. seek the intervention of the government in laying down procedures and mandating APR for all public relations appointments
- k. recognise the best practices by public relations consultancy firms in the country through annual review, and evaluation of their performances
- l. work with the business schools in the country to organise special orientation programme in public relations for the students and faculty, and later, to have the subject of public relations included in the management studies
- m. have an exchange programme to invite well-known PR professionals from across the globe to interact with the local PR practitioners
- n. organise annual function to award the APR and diplomas to the successful candidates
- o. promote APR qualification as a must for every PR practitioner through an effective mechanism of control and implementation in association with various other PR and management bodies in the country
- p. conduct various contact and mentoring programmes across India
- q. conduct short-term orientation programmes for skill upgradation for the working professionals
- r. appoint senior working professionals and academicians in public relations to act as counsellors and visiting faculties
- s. maintain a national level registry of all accredited PR professionals
- t. run a campaign to sensitise the government as well as the corporate sector in employing or using the services of only such PR professionals who have an APR qualification
- u. publish suitable literature, case studies, and other learning material for the students

5. ELIGIBILITY FOR APR

The candidate for APR should be:

- a. holding a Bachelor's / Master's degree or
- b. diploma/degree in mass communication, journalism, public relations
- c. in employment for the last 3 years as a public relations executive if holding a professional post-graduate degree stated in 'b' above; or 5 years experience with no professional degree

6. ACCREDITATION PROCEDURE

The IIPR shall hold the APR examination twice in a year on specified dates. The process shall involve :

- a. putting up national level advertisements in the major newspapers inviting applications for APR
- b. the application with appropriate documents shall be received by IIPR and reviewed by an expert committee
- c. on approval of the application, the candidates shall be requested to meet the local counsellors (APRs) to further approve the candidate's KSAs, who shall also recommend the appropriate study material
- d. IIPR shall issue necessary registration number to the candidate and announce the date and centre of examination
- e. Candidate shall be free to contact local counsellor appointed by IIPR for mentoring/ guidance.
- f. Submission of a case study on a subject decided mutually by the candidate and IIPR
- g. IIPR counsellor in each centre shall review the appropriateness of the examination centre and either act as an invigilator during the examination or appoint other local academicians for the purpose in association with the local chapter of the public relations body.
- h. The local chapters of the public relations body can be authorised by IIPR to conduct special courses as per prescribed syllabus
- i. After the written examination, the IIPR accreditation board members can travel to 2/3 destinations in the country to conduct the interviews.
- j. The APR can be later awarded at an appropriate function

7. ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. In order to create a high visibility high-value brand for IIPR, efforts should be made to involve some of the leading PR agencies to work on the visual identity and requisite collateral material, including promotional literature, publications, prospectus, application forms, APR Certificate, etc., right in the very beginning with a comprehensive manual of operations, so that the standardisation process starts right from home itself.
- b. The appointment of a secretary-general would be another crucial aspect to institutionalise the accreditation process which can sustain itself.

8. SYLLABUS FOR STUDIES

The syllabus suggested is appropriate. However, a few additional study on tools of communication and technology is a must. The revised KSA Groups can be as follows. However, these are suggestive and can be discussed in greater detail before finalising.

Research, Planning, Execution & Evaluation	25%
Communication Models and Theory	15%
Tools of Communication and Technology	10%
Ethics and Law	10%
Organisational Structure, Management Skills, Marketing, Financial & HR Issues	10%
Media Management	10%
Crisis Communication Management	10%
Planning & Managing a PR Campaign	5%
History and current issues in PR	2%
On-line PR	2%
Advanced Communication Skills	1%